

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Region 1 Citizen Advisory Committee
Feb. 23, 2023 Meeting Notes

Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Patrick Tabor

- Church Slough – Commission meeting decision explanation
- Lake Five – Commission will have FWP convene a work group to get recommendations
- Statewide fisheries management plan scheduled to come out for comment in summer

Parks and Outdoor Recreation Board Member Jody Loomis

- Update on December board meeting
- Snowmobile grooming update – not enough funding to replace groomers. There is an economic study taking place to examine the funding that is brought in because of snowmobiling. HB333
- Next Parks Board meeting topic will include Somers Beach
 - FWP Regional Parks and Outdoor Recreation Manager Dave Landstrom gave brief update on Somers Beach State Park development plan process

FWP Regional Wildlife Manager Neil Anderson

- Update on Noxon project (Elk & Adaptive Carnivore Mgmt Plan) – 5-year study
 - Recently caught 37 elk via helicopter
 - In the summer we will try to collar bears and wolves
 - Noxon gives the most “bang for the buck” on a project that we can draw the most from as there are more elk in Noxon and an easier ability to interact with the USFS as there are Timber Mgmt plans in place to study habitat.
 - Looking at similar projects in other areas like the South Fork Flathead and Bob Marshall
- Regional Supervisor Lee Anderson shared that this may be a good project to get some CAC members out on the ground participating. Neil confirms there is lots of opportunity for CAC to help and with the camera project.
- Dillon Tabish shared with all the Elk Project website for further information.
- Neil also updated on white tail deer population in the Swan. Visited with locals and discussed what they have also seen.

Elk Advisory Committee Summary – CAC member Ian Wargo

Objective: Addressing over-objective elk population but due to complexity of the issues doors were open to bigger discussions.

List of recommendations from this committee to FWP then out for public comment:

- Access Plus program to supplement Block Mgmt program
- Choose your weapon
- Collaboration between FWP, USFS, DNRC, BLN
- Data collection
- Stricter penalties for trespass
- expanding Hunter Education
- Community outreach – Landowner Stewardship program
- Promoting focused damage hunts
- Manage elk where they are not

Ian Wargo also had a meeting with FWP biologist Franz Ingelfinger and the USFS to talk/plan/learn more about the fuel's reduction timber management plan for Spotted Bear.

CAC member Cory Anderson recommends for the Elk Study in Noxon that FWP look at the USFS plan in that area too. It's important to have the info from these studies to back up these projects. These relationships are important. Cliff K. asks if there is a forester in FWP? (yes.)

Shooting Range Presentation – FWP Access & Landowner Relations Bureau Chief Stephanie Brown

- Introduction and areas of responsibility shared
- More thorough overview of the Shooting Range Grant program and Shooting Range Development Program.
 - Everything is a possibility, bring ideas to the table
 - CAC members were very engaged and offered assistance

Roundtable Discussion with CAC members

Mark Christenson - Disappointed in HB701 regarding the lack of marijuana funding coming to FWP. Has there been any thought to reducing NR tags and increasing Resident fees? There are too many NR on the landscape.

Cliff Kipp - HB573 Cap on funding for groups like AmeriCorps. Hopeful for support from FWP. Regional Sup Lee Anderson reminded CAC members that while he appreciates them discussing

bills and expressing opinions on them for the other members to hear, FWP isn't the mechanism to get that information to the legislature. The best way for them to impact the legislative process is for them to reach out directly to their legislators.

Jay Sheffield - read a letter from a concerned trapper in his area wanting to have snaring and foothold trapping separate in the regulations to protect each. i.e., if snaring gets closed, don't want it to effect regular trapping. Possibly have an earlier start date for footholds and later date for snares.

Cory Anderson - excited about the growing research that FWP has planned.

Tucker Landerman - brought up the NR issue (that Mark talked about above). Most of his clients at the barbershop said they would do it if it reduced NR pressure. Tucker also asks to be involved in the Elk Mgmt group but is not supportive of choose your weapon. Supportive of elk study.

Cody Voermans - NR tags discussion continued. Volunteers for helping on projects. Regional Sup Lee Anderson gave a brief explanation of recent licensing trends and that while there have been increases in the numbers of non-residents, it isn't as much as some have described. One thing contributing to things that might make it appear to be more is that people are hunting longer.

Erik Brown - Excited about the research plans. Volunteers to assist.

Ian Wargo - Regarding NR hunting pressure, there are a couple of bills addressing it. HB593 and LC3621. What does roadblocks to the camera project look like?

Commissioner Tabor - many NR questions, we need to have a working session for info to talk real facts, i.e., hunting on public land obligation...can't shut down public land to NR's.

Lee Anderson, next meeting agenda item will be a presentation from Licensing on NR details, licenses, B tags, hunters on landscape, hunter days.

Kayla Mosher - concerned about SB357 and cuts in state funding